

MINUTES

OF

CONVERSATIONS

BETWEEN

TRAVELLING PREACHERS,

AND

Delegates from the People,

Late in Connexion with the Rev. Mr. Wesley,

HELD IN

Ebenezer-Chapel, Leeds,

IN AUGUST 1797.

[PRICE TWO PENCE.]

MINUTES

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ADVERTISEMENT.

BY a printed letter from Mr. STONEHOUSE to the friends in several places, the trustees, leaders, &c. were requested to send delegates to Leeds, to attend an adjourned meeting, on the 31st of July, 1797. On the 1st of August the meeting was begun. On the 3d, when about seventy trustees, &c. were present, a motion was put and carried, of the last importance to the Methodist connexion. That is, that the preachers ought to admit two or more delegates from each district to sit with them in the conference, and help in disbursing the collections, making laws, &c. The resolution of the meeting was sent into the conference, but the preachers would by no means submit to it. They positively refused to admit of delegates into the conference. They learned afterwards from a committee of preachers, that delegates would not be admitted into district meetings. And when it was proposed for them to sit in a room near the place where the conference assembled, that no new law might be enacted without their special sanction, this privilege they would not grant. A number of delegates, from societies whose constituents were determined on a reform, continued to meet with the trustees, at the hours they assembled, after they were thoroughly convinced, that the preachers would not allow them their privileges. Though many of the trustees came to Leeds without having seriously examined the subjects that now agitate our body, yet before the meeting concluded, one sentiment seemed to prevail. That is, that the conference ought to devise a way in which the people could be united to them on a solid foundation, and have their interests one for ever. They were convinced, that lasting peace could not be restored unless this were effected.

Those of the delegates who were not admitted into Mr. DOBSON'S room, where the trustees assembled, met regularly in Ebenezer Chapel, to converse upon the steps necessary to be taken for our future prosperity. When the trustees did not meet, the delegates in favour of a reform, met with their friends in Ebenezer Chapel. Several things were mutually agreed upon by them, for the good of the connexion at large. But as many of those delegates met in Mr. Dobson's room, it was judged most expedient not to form a regular meeting in Ebenezer, till the trustees had adjourned their's.

However, lest the conference should think that the friends met in Ebenezer were determined to divide, without making proposals for unity, it was agreed upon on the 7th instant to send the following letter to the conference, with the out-lines of a plan for future union, annexed to it.

To the Preachers assembled in Conference.

DEAR FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

WE came to Leeds with no other design than to seek the glory of God, in the future prosperity of Methodism. When the major part of the trustee-meeting did not think proper to admit several of our friends to meet with them, who were delegated from the people, we thought it necessary to meet together, to converse upon such subjects as the present state of our affairs suggested.— When the trustees were not assembled in their room, those of our friends who met with them, attended with us. But we refused to form ourselves, when together, into a regular meeting, because of their union with the other meeting. However, that no time might be lost, we resolved to enter upon business. Lest any should declare, that our meeting was an avowed separation, without any provision for future unity, we mutually agreed to draw up, and preface what we should attend to, by the following declarations:—

“ At a meeting of the People’s Delegates, held at Leeds, the third of August, 1797, in Ebenezer Chapel, it was unanimously agreed, That the meeting should proceed to organize their plan of future conduct, according to the utmost of their ability and information; and that all their
decisions

decisions should remain in full force until the issue of the committee of preachers and delegates should be known; but if the issue of that meeting should be favourable to our views, all the proceedings of this evening, in regard to making provisions for a new itinerancy, should be null and void."

When the preachers rejected the proposal from the trustees, and refused to admit delegates from the districts into the conference, our hopes of reconciliation languished: but when we heard the result of the meeting, held between a committee of delegates and some of the preachers, we were conscious that nothing could restore peace and unity, without the singular interposition of Divine Providence. But as all things are possible with God, we have agreed to send in to the conference the particulars we have drawn up and agreed to, for our future conduct. If the preachers can unite with us upon this, or a similar plan, we shall exceedingly rejoice, but if they are resolved not to do it—we must divide. Because all that we propose appears to be founded on the scriptures, and in every respect both reasonable and just.

Signed in behalf of the Friends,

JOHN SHORE.

1. LET one or more delegates, chosen by the quarterly meeting, composed of trustees, stewards, local preachers, and leaders, attend, with an equal number of travelling preachers, at the district meetings, possessed of equal powers, to transact all business relative to the respective circuits which they represent.

2. Let trustees in legal matters of necessity only, as it respects their powers of trust for the people, have a delegate in district meetings, and in conference, during the time of their particular business.

3. Let these delegates when assembled together at a district meeting, elect one or more from their body to attend an equal number of travelling preachers at the conference. These delegates shall possess equal powers with the travelling preachers, in every respect. They shall carry in all the public collections, and assist in disbursing them. No new laws or rules shall be made, without their

concurrence; and all the laws and rules respecting discipline, that already exist, shall only be binding by being revised, with their special sanction: particularly those laws and rules made since the death of Mr. Wesley: and the power of the delegates shall cease when the conference is ended.

4. Let members be received into society in the following manner:—

1. No leader shall bring a person to a travelling preacher for a note of admission, until he has met four times. No person received on trial only, shall have his name in the class-paper. 2. Every person shall be considered on trial until he has met in class two months. 3. Every leader shall bring a list of those persons who have met two months, to the leaders' meeting. The preacher shall read the list in the meeting, and if the majority approve, he shall receive them into connexion, in the society meeting, the Sunday evening following, by exhortation and prayer. 4. The leaders shall give those persons who are to be received, timely notice in their respective classes. 5. The leaders, with the preachers, shall judge of exempt cases, whether arising from modesty, natural relations, &c.

5. Let members be excluded from the society in the following manner:—

1. Those who do not renew their tickets quarterly, or omit their class without a sufficient reason being given, exclude themselves. No member shall be privately put out of society.

2. Every fourth leaders' meeting, the travelling preacher shall enquire whether there be any in their different classes, that do not meet regularly, or walk disorderly and will not be reprov'd; and whether sufficient means have been used to reclaim them.

The preacher shall, if the majority judge them unworthy of a place in the society, exclude them by crossing their names out of the class papers. No person shall be expelled until such measures have been adopted. But if any person think himself aggrieved, he shall have a fair trial by a jury chosen from among the society, he choosing five, and the leaders' meeting choosing an equal number, and the travelling preacher attending, shall have the casting voice.

6. The method of chusing leaders. 1. In new places, leaders shall be appointed by the mutual concurrence of the travelling preachers, and the people. 2. But in other places, when a new leader is wanted, the leaders' meeting shall nominate a person to supply the class for one month, and if the class approve of the nomination, the person shall be appointed; but if a class be dissatisfied with the leader, they shall state their complaints to the leaders' meeting, and shall have them properly attended to: Other leaders shall be appointed till the majority of the class are satisfied. If any in the minority cannot submit, they shall be admitted to meet in what classes they please, provided their objections are deemed valid by the major part of the leaders' meeting.

7. Let stewards be appointed to, or removed from their office, by the concurrence of the major part of a full leaders' meeting; notice thereof being previously given in the society meeting.

8. Let no circuit stewards be appointed to, or removed from their office, without the concurrence of a majority of a quarterly meeting; and let no town or circuit stewards abide longer in that office than two years, unless in particular cases, mutually agreed upon by the brethren that are present in such a quarterly meeting. But in large towns, and in circuits, let not all the stewards be changed at once, unless other persons can be brought forward, deemed sufficiently acquainted with the business.

9. Method of appointing local preachers. 1. If any person think it his duty to preach amongst us, let him first consult his leader on the subject, and then let the leader mention it to a leaders' meeting; and they shall give their opinion for or against his admission. 2. Let no person act as a local preacher, untill proposed to, and approved by a majority of a full leaders' meeting. 3. Let no one have a plan as a local preacher, until proposed at, and approved by the majority of a quarterly meeting; and a local preachers' meeting, if there be one in the circuit.*

10. Let
* If it be reported to the leaders' meeting, that any person takes upon himself to pray, exhort, and expound the scriptures in public, without

10. Let no person go out to travel under any pretence whatever, untill he be mentioned and approved of by a majority of a leaders', local preachers', quarterly, and district meeting. But if there can be no local preachers' meeting held in a circuit, the decision of the other three meetings shall be sufficient.

11. 1. Let no person be admitted into full connexion, until he has travelled four years. 2. Let no person received on trial, be admitted into full connexion, without being recommended by the two last circuits where he has travelled, expressed in writing from their quarterly meetings, to the district meeting and the conference.

12. Let every private member of society, censured or expelled, who thinks himself aggrieved, and cannot have redress in the place where he resides, have a power of appealing from a leaders' meeting, and have a fair examination of his case before the brethren in the quarterly meeting, and their decision shall be final, unless in very particular cases. And every trustee, steward, local preacher, and leader, shall have an appeal from the quarterly to the district meeting; where every thing shall be fully examined, and finally settled; unless the case be so particularly important, that an appeal to the conference be deemed necessary by a majority of that district meeting.

The following answer was returned, inclosing the printed Address of the Conference, (*upon which a few Remarks will be made at the end of the Minutes.*)

Dear Brethren,

We received your letter, and it was read in the conference, and the inclosed is the answer. In behalf of the conference, we are affectionately yours, &c.

LEEDS, Aug. 9, 1797. T. Coke, President.
S. Bradburn, Secretary.

When Messrs. Thom, Henry Taylor, and Eversfield had joined us, and the other meeting was adjourned, we formed ourselves into a regular meeting on the 9th, and proceeded to business. Wm. Thom was appointed President, and Alex. Kilham, Secretary.

Q. 1. What their consent, they shall immediately take the matter into consideration, and act as the majority of that meeting deem the most proper.

Q. 1. What places, seeking a redress of grievances, in the connexion, are desirous of supporting a new itinerancy, since that redress cannot be had?

A. A part of the Sheffield society and circuit. Also of Nottingham, Banbury, Burslem, Macclesfield, Chester, Liverpool, Wigan, Bolton, Blackburn, Manchester, Oldham, Huddersfield, Leeds, Epworth, Otley, Ripon, Newcastle, Alnwick, &c. and several places in those as well as in other circuits.

Q. 2. What travelling preachers do we expect will help us in supplying them?

A. Wm. Thom, H. Taylor, M. Emmett, S. Eversfield, A. Cummin, A. Kilham, J. Mort, and J. Mallison. Also J. Grundell, and J. Farrer.

Q. 3. What shall be done to get preachers to fill up the vacancies?

A. Let the persons present mention any local preachers of good report, suitably qualified for the work, and the friends be written to where they live, to know whether or not they can be well recommended, and are willing to come out, by the choice of the people. 2. Let a committee be appointed to receive information respecting any local preacher properly recommended, and let them have power for *this year* to appoint them where they are particularly wanted. 3. Let the circuits be formed upon such an extensive scale, that a door may be open for the reception of acceptable travelling and local preachers, whose hearts may be disposed to help in this glorious work. — 4. Let the local preachers exert themselves every where to supply the places which particularly desire to unite with us; and let those who are in poor circumstances, have something allowed them for the loss of their time, &c. By their exertions, the places will be well supplied, till more preachers are appointed to travel, and the friends will be satisfied.

Q. 4. Will all the travelling preachers abide with us, who have come forward, of their own accord, to our help?

A. Messrs. H. Taylor and Emmett have left us. They came forward, and seemed determined to serve our friends, but soon left our meeting, without giving any satisfactory reasons for their change of conduct. A few remarks will be made on the steps they have taken in another place.

Q. 5. How

Q. 5. How shall the preachers be disposed of who are determined to serve the people, that cannot be satisfied without a redress of grievances?

A. *Leeds, Huddersfield, &c.* Wm. Thom,†

Sheffield, &c. A. Kilham.

Hanley, &c. J. Grundell.

Manchester, Stockport, Macclesfield, &c. James Mort.

Liverpool, Chester, &c. A. Cummin, J. Mallison.

North Shields, &c. S. Eversfield.

Nottingham.

Epworth.

Q. 5. Who are the committee appointed to receive accounts from travelling or local preachers, and to whom persons may apply for preachers well recommended to help them this year?

A. W. Thom, A. Kilham, S. Eversfield, E. Oakes, R. Hall, W. Smith, J. Shore, R. Oastler, and J. Dixon.—N. B. To expedite business, it is requested, that letters be addressed to Mr. Dixon, China man, Leeds. Every attention will be given that circumstances will admit of, to satisfy the friends in every place.

Q. 6. What shall we do respecting books for this year?

A. Let two thousand of the large hymn book in a small edition, with sacramental, and festival hymns annexed, be either printed immediately, or purchased as soon as possible; and let them be sold on reasonable terms. Let the Christian Pattern, Primitive Physic, and other books be purchased and circulated among the people. Let the first four volumes of Mr. Wesley's sermons be printed in six penny numbers, published once a month, and be circulated on as reasonable terms as can be devised.

Q. 7. When

† At present, we can only appoint one person for each circuit, to superintend it with the help of the friends; because we have determined not to admit any to travel with us, but persons who are well recommended by the people, and brought forward in regular order. We have no doubt but the committee will soon receive information of preachers, either travelling or local, who will come forward to help us in the gospel. If Providence smile on our undertakings, we shall see glorious things accomplished by the power of God.

Q. 7. When shall the next conference be held?

A. The last Monday in May, 1798, at the place mutually agreed upon by the different circuits.

Signed in behalf of the Conference,

WM THOM, President.

A. KILHAM, Secretary.

Leeds, August 11, 1797.

WE are sorry that circumstances oblige us to make the following observation on the conduct of Messrs. H. Taylor and Emmett:—In September last year, they with the help of Mr. Bramwell, &c. proposed some rules for the better regulation of the Sheffield society.—The leaders' meeting adopted them. They were made a blessing to the people. Although this was contrary to the old plan, yet the good effects they produced, caused them to rejoice in their establishment. In the month of November, the letter signed by Mr. Bramwell was circulated. Mr. Taylor and others sanctioned its publication, but withheld their signatures. That letter complains more heavily of the Methodist preachers in general, than any thing that has yet been published. Early this spring, Messrs. Taylor, &c. thought their measures had provoked the preachers to such a degree, that it would be impossible for them ever to be reconciled. Several letters which they received from different preachers wore a threatening aspect. Mr. Taylor went down into Lancashire, and canvassed for a division of the connexion in several places; particularly in Liverpool.

On

On his return from those places, he entered with his brethren, upon forming a new constitution. After they had made a number of new laws, in favour of the people, in a large meeting of local preachers, leaders, &c. they positively declared, unless the conference would meet them upon those grounds, they would come out and serve the people themselves. Early in May, Mr. Taylor sent me a letter, requesting I would meet him and Mr. Bramwell in Sheffield as soon as possible. When I came there, and had an opportunity of conversing with Messrs. Taylor, Bramwell, and Emmett, I found they were determined on a radical redress of grievances, or on a division. Messrs. Taylor and Emmett seemed conscious, that nothing but a division would satisfy our friends in different places, as they had no prospect of the conference ever acceding to their measures.

At the district meeting held in Leeds, Mr. Taylor read their new constitution to the preachers, and spoke several things in favour of the people. The matter was referred to the conference. They were considered by some of the leading preachers as opposed to the conference, and they did not fail to represent them as disaffected to the cause of Methodism. It appears, by the letters they sent, &c. that they were looked upon as lost to the connexion.

Since the district meeting, the friends in Sheffield and in the circuit can bear testimony, how much they have declared in favour of religious liberty, and how loudly they have complained against the arbitrary proceedings of the leading men in our connexion.

When Messrs Taylor and Emmett came to Leeds in July, they seemed determined to abide by their former declarations. Mr. Bramwell acted very cautiously, for a season. At length, however, he resolved to continue with the preachers, let the consequences attending his former conduct be what they might. But Messrs. Taylor and Emmett determined to join us. Mr. Taylor signed the following letter, with Mr. Thom; and Mr. Emmett sent a line into the conference afterwards, to inform the preachers that he wished to add his name to it, and leave the connexion on the same grounds.

DEAR

DEAR BRETHREN,

WE shall make no apology for our delay in not declaring our minds sooner, but only observe, that we signed the rules in good faith [alluding to the revised minutes of the conference] and waited for the conference to declare its resolution respecting the plans of delegation and pacification. We cannot hesitate any longer to inform you, 1. That we believe the people should be properly united with the preachers by delegates. 2. That the word separation in the plan of pacification ought to be fully explained to the connexion, in order that the trustees, stewards, and leaders may understand the terms of agreement into which they have entered with the conference. And the minority of any society, which desires the supper of the Lord, should have it administered to them. 3. That many hundreds, perhaps thousands of our people are dissatisfied with the resolutions of the conference on these subjects, and will be scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Therefore, although we came to the conference fully determined to continue in union with our brethren, if we could act in sincerity of heart, yet we now feel ourselves obliged to declare, That we must withdraw and act in union with those of the people, whose sentiments agree with our own.

We feel no desire to reflect on any of our brethren who differ from us; we believe they act in sincerity with their own principles, and may be useful to those who agree to with them. We love and respect many of them, with whom we have long been acquainted, and part with great reluctance.

We are determined, that we will not make either the pulpit or the press the vehicle of abuse. But if we should be called upon to speak to the point in controversy among us, we shall press into the service of the cause, arguments drawn from scripture, and the primitive customs of the church of Christ.

Blessings be upon you, and yours,
Praying

Praying that the great Head of the Church would bless the members of his mystical body in every part, and unite us all to him in the bonds of divine love, we remain,

Dear Brethren, your's affectionately,

WM. THOM.

HEN. TAYLOR.

Messrs. Taylor and Emmett came to our meeting on the 9th of August. They appeared very zealous for us, and proposed several local preachers to come out on trial. Yesterday in the morning we were informed that Mr. Emmett had returned to the conference. When Mr. Taylor was missing in the forenoon, we sent to enquire after him, and to know the reason of his not attending with us. He sent word back, that he was very poorly in body, and greatly oppressed in mind; he even went so far as to say, he could not live two days unless he were relieved. In the meantime, however, he was exceedingly busy negotiating with several preachers respecting his return. He went to Mr. Mather, and to all appearance the matter was then settled. He wished me to attend him about half past one o'clock. He spoke of his distress, and said it would kill him to leave the old connexion. After I had delivered my mind freely to him, and begged he would consider what he was doing, we parted. He authorized me to inform our friends, that he should not meet with them any more.

Let the reader consider, 1. Mr. Taylor's avowed principles ever since he came among us, have been favourable to religious liberty. He has pleaded for the rights of our people, and has acted upon his own principles in several respects. 2. His bringing forward and prevailing on the leaders to establish certain rules, contrary to the old plan, in Sheffield, was a proof of his desire to promote the welfare of the people. 3. His going into Lancashire this spring to canvass for a division, is a proof of his motives at that time. 4. His drawing up the new constitution for the connexion, in which sentiments are avowed contrary to the present system, is a farther proof of his having declared himself a friend of the people. 5. The steps he took at the district meeting in Leeds, sufficiently testify

tify, that he thought a radical redress of grievances was absolutely necessary. 6. His solemn and repeated declarations to the people in Sheffield, and in other places, that he would leave the connexion, unless the rights of the people were allowed, and help in a new itinerancy, are proofs so well known, that every person informed of them must be astonished at his present conduct. 7. His signing the letter to the conference, after declaring upon the propriety of the measure for ten days, is a farther demonstration of his intentions. 8. His coming among us, and being zealous to help in supplying the places where the people request preachers, discovers his view to be fully in favour of the friends of reform.

If these things are put together, the reader will be able to judge how far Mr. Taylor acted according to the scriptures—his own principles, and former conduct—and the solemn declarations he had made use of, to serve the cause of religious liberty, when he left us. I shall make no farther reflections here. To his own Master he stands or falls. God is able to support his own truth, "though friends should all fail, and foes all unite." To him we commend our cause, not doubting but he will help and deliver.

Left Mr. Henry Taylor should think himself aggrieved in what might appear in our minutes respecting his conduct, I sent him the following note, between nine and ten o'clock, in the morning of August 12, 1797.

Dear Sir,

I wish you to see a piece that is in the press, respecting the steps you have taken, that if you can produce any reasonable objection against it, you may. But you must call about eleven o'clock, or it will be gone to the press, (and struck off immediately.)

I am, your's, &c.

A. KILHAM.

This note was put into his own hand. When he refused to call, I waited upon him with two friends, to read

Praying that the great Head of the Church would bless the members of his mystical body in every part, and unite us all to him in the bonds of divine love, we remain,

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Left Mr. Henry Taylor should think himself aggrieved in what might appear in our minutes respecting his conduct, I sent him the following note, between nine and ten o'clock, in the morning of August 12, 1797.

Dear Sir,

I wish you to see a piece that is in the press, respecting the steps you have taken, that if you can produce any reasonable objection against it, you may. But you must call about eleven o'clock, or it will be gone to the press, (and struck off immediately.)

I am, your's, &c.

A. KILHAM.

This note was put into his own hand. When he refused to call, I waited upon him with two friends, to read

what I had written, that he might object to any part of it, if he could ; but after repeated intreaties he refused to hear a line of it.

LEEDS, Aug. 12, 1797.

A. KILHAM.

REMARKS

On a Letter published by the Conference, to the different Societies, dated August 7, 1797.

IN this letter several alterations are said to have taken place for the advantage of the people. The following is an extract from them : 1. " We are determined to publish annually a very minute account of the disbursement of the yearly collection, 2. A full account of the affairs of Kingswood-school. 3. That all bills for the support of travelling preachers and their families, for which the circuit cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the quarterly meeting, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought to the district committee. 4. No circuits shall be divided till such division has been approved of by their respective quarterly meetings, and signed by the general stewards. 5. No other temporal matters shall be transacted by the district committees, till the approbation of the respective quarterly meetings be first given, signed by the circuit stewards. 6. The leaders' meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial, improper to be received into the society, and after such declaration the superintendent shall not admit such person into the society. 7. No person shall be expelled from the society for immorality, till such immorality be proved by a leaders' meeting. 8. No person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the leaders' meeting ; the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the leaders' meeting." — Some of these are improvements of considerable importance. Our friends will rejoice, that the conference have gone thus far. But there are many things

in this letter, which sufficiently prove, that the power of governing still remains with the preachers.

1. Though they have said, " All bills for support of travelling preachers, and their families, shall meet with the approbation of the quarterly meeting, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought into the district committee," yet, they have not enacted, that every thing shall be paid according to that statement; nor have they declared, that the preachers shall not have a power to bring any thing else forward, in the district meetings and in the conference, which were not named in the quarterly meetings. Besides travelling expences for any that please to attend the conference, and long removes of families, which generally swallow up very large sums of money, are not, cannot be settled in quarterly meetings. Have they power to hinder any preacher from going to the conference?—Have they any hand in the removal of families? While the preachers can travel where, and as they please, and remove from one corner of the kingdom to another, and the quarterly meeting never be consulted on the subject.—Have the preachers sacrificed much, if any, of their power on this head?

2. Though there is an appearance of giving up much, respecting the appointment or removal of leaders or stewards, yet, is there any thing given up in reality? The superintendent claims the right of nomination. And therefore, though the leaders' meeting may reject several, yet they must submit to have such as he pleases, while the nomination rests solely with him. Pray where is the sacrifice of power in this rule? Is it not more in words than in reality?

3. The rule is confirmed respecting local preachers.—They will say, " No local preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of the circuit where he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, but from men in office, who act in conjunction with the superintendent of that circuit which he visits." This rule is absolute. It is confirmed in its full force. The most respectable local preacher in Leeds, cannot visit a circuit in the neighbourhood, if he is ever so

well known, without applying to the superintendent for a recommendation, nor be admitted if he have one, unless he obtain permission from "men in office with the superintendent of the circuit which he visits." Are not these men in office the colleagues of an assistant preacher?— From the very letter of this rule we naturally infer, that every time a local preacher desires to visit a circuit where he does not live, if it were only half a mile from his own habitation, he must apply to the heads of two circuits for admission. They have power to *permit him to go* or not, as their own will directs. All the colouring upon the rule, while it is so absolutely expressed, avails nothing. It is in full force, and every local preacher flies in the face of the conference, and is liable to a trial, whenever he preaches in a circuit without qualifying himself, according to the letter of this rule. Pray have the conference given up any of their power, by reprinting this rule?

4. Upon holding meetings they observe, "As the leaders' meeting is the proper meeting for the society, and the quarterly meeting for the circuit, we think that other formal meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences. Other formal meetings may be held, if they first receive the approbation of the superintendent, and the leaders' or quarterly meeting, provided also, that the superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting." Upon this passage, let us remember, 1. That many preachers have determinately refused to suffer different publications to be read, or subjects of the last importance to our connexion to be discussed, in leaders' and quarterly meetings. 2. The friends were driven to this alternative; either to submit, or hold meetings without the approbation of the superintendent. 3. Would many superintendents admit of a "formal meeting" to be called, to examine their own power and influence? And were they to set their face against such meetings before the leaders, and on a quarter-day, would they be admitted on any account whatever? 4. Besides, were they admitted while a superintendent is allowed to be present, and to controul the proceedings of the friends, can they expect any benefit from such meetings? Have the

the conference given up any of their power on this head?

5. They have enacted, should the conference make a new rule, a major part of a quarterly meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, may refuse to be subject to it for one year; but if the conference see good to enact it into law the next year, "it shall be binding to the whole connexion." What a strange plan is this! For one year, the law can only be binding by the sanction of a quarterly meeting in conjunction with the preachers, without the consent of the people. This solely rests however, on the preachers acting in union with leaders, &c. In another, the societies may be without law as it refers to that rule. At the end of the year, however, should the conference think proper, the rule must be obeyed by all who approve, or disapprove of it. Is not this law calculated to disturb the connexion for one year at least, if not for ages? The conference, however, have made an arbitrary law to enforce it. They say, "Nevertheless, the quarterly meetings rejecting a new rule, shall not by publications, public meetings, or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention; but shall strive by every means to preserve the peace of the connexion."—This law is admirably well timed! Suppose the present conference should make a law, while they are assembled together, that no local preacher shall be allowed to speak publicly under any pretence whatever, the next year. If one circuit should tamely submit to it, and another determine not to bow their neck to this; should the latter publish any thing to show the absurdity of this law, or in any way expose it, and occasion any contention between the oppressed, and those that are free, he would break a revealed law, of the present conference. Does this rule destroy, or increase the power of the preachers? They make one law that new rules shall be examined for a year, and after that forced upon the societies if they think proper, and another law that you shall not publish, hold meetings or do any thing to create contention upon this law! Surely you must be subject not for wrath but conscience sake, to such an excellent plan!

These are all the parts of the letter that have the shadow of sacrificing power to the people. The conference still retains

retains the power, 1. Of nominating leaders and stewards, till the leaders' or quarterly meetings comply. 2. Of cramping local preachers in their labours. 3. Of preventing the people from meeting, or cramping them when they meet in their measures. 4. Of electing preachers into their body, or expelling them. 5. Of holding district meetings and conferences, privately by themselves. 6. Of proposing and making what laws they please; and compelling the people to receive them. 7. The book-room, Kingswood school, and preachers' fund collections, are entirely managed by them. 8. The yearly collection is still, notwithstanding the declarations of this letter, in a great measure, under their influence.

After making the trivial alterations specified above, and retaining their own power in every thing of consequence, is it not amazingly surprising to hear them say, "Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands; the whole of our yearly collection to your management—the conference in this business will have no authority—the whole management of our temporal concerns may now be truly said to be invested in the quarterly meetings, the district meetings have nothing but a negative, &c." Only examine what these pages contain, and ask yourselves, Are these things so? The government still rests on the shoulders of the preachers, in every thing of importance.

There is something curious in the following declaration: "There is now no society officer among us, who can be received without the consent of that meeting, to which he belongs; nor can any officer be appointed, but upon the same plan." If a "society officer be among us," does he want receiving on any plan?—And while the power of nomination remains in the hands of the superintendent, cannot he bring any person forward, who is the object of his choice.

They say, "In short, out of our great love for peace and union, and our great desire to satisfy your minds, we have given up to you far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority." But what crowns all is found in these words: "We trust, that on a serious consideration of the regulations we have agreed to at this conference, you will see, that the sacrifices, in respect to authority, which

which we have made on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers, evidence our willingness to meet our brethren in every thing which is consistent with the existence of the Methodist discipline, and our readiness to be their servants for Jesu's sake." Could not the discipline of Methodism exist, unless the preachers nominate leaders—cramp local preachers—prevent the people from meeting, except they submit to restrictions degrading to Englishmen? Does the existence of Methodism require the preachers to appoint or expel the members of their own body—to meet alone in the district meetings and in the conference,—and to make what laws they please?

A great deal of this letter is taken up in declarations of sacrifices made, and what they have done to preserve the "very existence of Methodism," and yet when we examine the matter closely, we find hardly any thing given up, and all the power which is holding retained by them. Let any impartial person acquainted with our affairs candidly read over what they have published, with these remarks, and then let him ask himself, whether or not the conference has made such sacrifices, as this letter insinuates?

This morning the following printed paper was read in our meeting. It is necessary to observe, before it be inserted, what gave rise to this *test act*.

Soon after the conference opened, Mr. MATHER insinuated, that unless the junior brethren would acquit the senior preachers, of charges brought against them in certain publications, respecting their being tyrannical and oppressive to the people and themselves, he would not choose to act in that conference. Last night, one of the preachers with a large family, after relating this circumstance, declared it came to this alternative: "Sign or depart." Whether all whose names are annexed to it acted according to their formerly avowed principles or not, those who are particularly acquainted with them, will be able to determine;

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To the Members and Friends
OF THE
METHODIST SOCIETIES.

VARIOUS unkind reflections having been thrown out, in certain publications, concerning such of the senior preachers as are said to direct and manage our connexion, as if they were "Tyrants and Oppressors," and the other preachers but mere "Cyphers," We, whose names are under-written, think it our duty to repel such reflections by declaring, That, instead of considering our senior brethren in the light of "Tyrants and Oppressors," we feel ourselves under great obligations to them, for their extraordinary labour and fatigue in the service of the Conference. We are satisfied, that their piety, abilities, faithfulness, diligence, usefulness, and long continuance in the work of the ministry, entitle them to the respect and esteem of the whole connexion.—And though we are taught by our Saviour, to "call no man Master upon earth;" yet, regarding them as our Fathers, we conceive it our duty to hear them speak in our conferences with that deference which is due to their age and character; especially, as we are persuaded they have greatly contributed to keep the body one in the Lord. We should think it an honour to wash their feet; and our desire and prayer is, to follow them as they have followed Christ!

What is the design of this paper? Have none of the senior preachers oppressed the people, and acted tyrannically? Have not many of the preachers been like "cyphers" compared with them? Have they "greatly contributed to keep the body one," or have their measures compelled many of the societies to divide? If Jesus Christ has commanded us to call no man Master upon earth, is it right that any number of preachers should take this character, and others be subject to their will? Is it not cruel to require the junior preachers to sign a paper of this nature, to sanction the measures of those who have acted in many things against the interests of the people? And to require them either to sign or quit the connexion, is a circumstance that must be viewed with horror, by every impartial

impartial observer. Does not this paper prove to a demonstration, that tyranny and oppression are manifest in the connexion? Are not the preachers who signed this paper, rather to be pitied than condemned? Though it was signed by 96 of them, on the impulse of the moment, yet, we cannot think many of them would have given their signatures, had they properly considered the consequences.

N. B. An attempt was made in the conference, for a few preachers to superintend the whole connexion. It was designed for each of them to have a number of circuits under his care, as a kind of diocese, and to preside over them as a travelling bishop. But this motion was rejected by a great majority of the preachers.

But what follows, will astonish every person properly acquainted with the Methodist connexion. The conference have enacted, that "*Mr. Mather is requested to visit our societies, to which he is invited by the superintendents of the circuits respectively; and to give advice when applied to, concerning preaching-houses, or any thing else relating to the connexion; and also, to inform the superintendents, on application, what preachers remain on the list of reserve, and can go out to travel.*" This law was passed almost unanimously.

N. B. Notwithstanding we are constrained to separate from our brethren, we hope, that we shall ever be ready to give them the right-hand of fellowship; therefore, members of the Old Connexion will be admitted at Love-feasts or Sacrament.

The following
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had of all the Preachers in the NEW CONNEXION:

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